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## **Social Studies and Service-learning: The Aleph of Democratic Citizenship?**

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### **Abstract**

Striking at the heart of social studies is an educational practice that restricts citizenship involvement in the promotion of a democratic society. Alberta Learning (2000) defines Social studies as "a school subject that assists students to acquire [the] basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes needed to be responsible citizens and contributing members of society" (p. 1). Important to social studies education are the efforts students must make to bring new meaning to citizenship and community as a part of their national identity. Can social studies contribute to developing students' identity as citizens and promote an active and responsible role in Canadian society? Can education balance active involvement, and student responsibility, with the demands of curriculum, evaluation, and student uniqueness? One solution to the questions posed here is for a reform that integrates the experiential — that is, the active aspect of citizenship-with the social studies curriculum through service-learning.

### **The Vision of Canadian Social Studies**

To gain a deeper understanding of the vision for social studies' role in Canada's education system, one would have to start with the curricular intent. Currently, there seems to be a fragmented view in curricular philosophy with regard to content/process objectives and even the necessity for such a course, as a part of the "instructional core." This divisive perspective on this subject area has not only pitted the scholars of the field in debate, but has divided the practitioners in the classroom in instructional practice. Thus, confronting attempts for a common perspective are challenges of a non-unified understanding and divided acceptance of the role of social studies in Canadian education. Striking at the heart of social studies is an educational practice that restricts students' genuine citizenship involvement and the promotion of the societal democratic aim. This becomes an instructional dilemma that is compounded when classroom methods are aligned with a societal reality forcing the teacher to grapple with the pluralistic, regional expanse of Canada. How can a course, like social

studies, reconcile the actuality of the Canadian polity and the issues of community uniqueness with individual learner needs and the hopes of contributing to the national identity through citizenship? The question at the forefront of this analysis is whether social studies has in fact lost sight of its intended purpose, or if social studies, as a course for senior high school students, can adopt innovative methodologies of instruction to remain a viable classroom offering.

Is there promise and hope for a common definition of who we are as Canadians in light of cultural, economic, regional, and historical differences as a practicing parliamentary democracy facing ever-changing global realities? What is the understanding, among citizens, of Canada and the Canadian spirit as a multicultural, pluralistic country? The challenge of a contemporary curriculum is to address the specific and general outcomes for students within the diverse entity we now call Canada. A past response to diversity was the "Common Curriculum Framework for Social studies K-12." This document stated:

[Social studies will] meet the needs and reflect the nature of the 21st century learner and will have the concepts of Canadian citizenship and identity at its heart. It will be reflective of the diverse cultural perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, which contribute to Canada's evolving realities. The Framework will ultimately contribute to a Canadian spirit- a spirit that will be fundamental in creating a sense of belonging for each one of our students as he or she engages in active and responsible citizenship locally, nationally, and globally (WCP Social studies K-12 Foundation Document, 2000, p. 5).

Succinctly, Alberta Learning (2000) defines social studies as "a school subject that assists students to acquire [the] basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes needed to be responsible citizens and contributing members of society" (p. 1). This concise definition is reflective of curriculum documents in social studies Canada-wide (Sears, 1997, p. 23). To accommodate the vast range of interests, abilities, needs and future directions of Canadian students, curricular theorists must extend their assessment beyond an over-argued investment in content, methodology, and process by offering real, tangible directions for practices in Canadian schools. There is a need to instigate a challenging analysis of concept development, critical thinking, student creativity, and methods to develop the skills required by students, but generated through their own inquiries. The strength of a sound social studies course rests with the "practiced...variety of skills and strategies" (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 1) that are needed to face a changing society. Ideally, students will gain in the ability to acquire knowledge, interpret their findings, and communicate discoveries in order to solve problems. Inherent in this process is the nurturing of student creativity and its application to various realities that constitute the Canadian social landscape. Therefore, the purpose of social studies education, linked as it is with citizenship education as a primary aspiration, "[is] to cultivate a sense of national cohesion, loyalty and obligation to the nation..." (Garrat, 2000, p. 324). However, I am left questioning the type of citizen we are shaping in social studies: a national citizen or an active democratic citizen embedded within the community?

### **The Realities Facing the Classroom in Fulfilling the Vision**

Merryfield & Subedi (2001) state the primary role of social studies is to prepare youth for civic competence. Central to their argument is that social studies "must go beyond" traditional constructs of knowledge to incorporate more perspectives from diverse global cultures (p.

278). How is this possible in a pluralistic society like Canada? Can a single curriculum accommodate so many various and multiple distinctions? Pettit (1997) & Callan (1997) clearly state that citizenship education cannot rely on traditional views in education. Rather, it must hold as central the ideal of democracy "while allowing for religious and cultural pluralism" (Annette, 1999, p. 87). Canadian social studies not only has to account for and balance regional divisions, political views, class differences, religious beliefs and gender concerns, it must also complement the curriculum at a deeper level to reflect the multicultural richness that is rapidly growing within Canadian classrooms. Taylor (1993) envisions a "deep diversity" which will bind us in a national enterprise. The doubt that plagues my enthusiasm for Taylor's vision is whether we have in fact achieved "ways of belonging... [that are] acknowledged and accepted" and that embrace all citizens within the curricular framework (p. 183). Teachers and students struggle to understand their potential to develop a sense of national identity even as members of disparate cultures within the larger context of Canadian culture. I am curious about the moment when I discovered, realized and acknowledged that I was a citizen, and a Canadian. As a teacher of social studies, I am curious to know when students within Canada's range of cultures embraced their sense of being Canadian, and particularly within their cultural identity.

To complicate the classroom experience further, Seixas (2002) reminds social studies teachers of our "historical consciousness" (p. 3). Do these teachers all share this "consciousness?" How can students that occupy the fringe of plurality develop a sense of citizenship in the present and conceptualize their national identity for the future when their connections to historical accounts derive from different experiences? Social studies education is in need of "unifying moments" that bind students to the curriculum within the classroom experience. Due to an overriding dissociation of self from culture, community and national identity, the number of students finding themselves on the margins of what curriculum deems to be mainstream is increasing. This is creating a straining point in classroom relations, curricular relevancy, and the community for a responsible active citizen. As educators we need to follow Santora's (2001) work in multicultural education in the "quest for new meanings of citizenship, community, and governance" (p. 153). In short, as social studies teachers, we have to "negotiate a curricula" (Santora, 2001, p. 154) that is respectful of the pluralities. However, if we are to achieve Kincheloe's (1993) "critical consciousness," a challenge is to consider the issues of culture, gender and community membership that each student confronts if we hope to cultivate a responsible and "active citizen" (Barber, 1998). I posit that once hegemonic consciousness is challenged, especially at the social nexus of citizenship identity, we must go further and push the constraints of current scholarship and classroom practice. Santora (2001) contests our "curriculum of sameness" (Carson & Johnston, 2001) with the following assertion: "change must be both deep and pervasive" (p. 152) for educational practice to succeed in a multicultural plurality. The aim for social studies education, then, at the level of classroom practice, is to engender and foster "multi-cultural citizenship" (Garrat, 2000).

What is the cause of our disintegrating sense of democracy and growing numbers of apathetic citizens? Can social studies provide the needed infusion of democratic values for faltering communities? Smith (2000) would contend that the fact that we are suffering a national crisis is in part due to a sweeping sense of individual isolation. Social studies should heed the following recommendation:

that reason cannot be ripped out of its social, cultural and political contexts, and that although reason, as the capacity to think and make sense of life, may indeed be a universal quality,

people and cultures make sense in their own ways, according to the circumstances that life has laid before them. (Smith, 2000, p. 1)

How do we educate a citizen for a democratic society if our curricular methods have removed the student from their "reasoning context?" Smith's reading affords a clear analysis of the ramifications to community identity because of a larger society girdled by neo-liberal economics. According to Smith (2000), we are being reduced to a "new form of dependency culture" (p. 2). Because families are on the move and because earners garner lower wages, family bonds are disintegrating and there is a lack of real community affiliation that has brought about a decline in public education as a consequence of "the decline of simple civility and a sense of the common good" (p. 2). Can public education remedy this? Can social studies contribute to the development of a tangible citizenship identity to affect an individual's active and responsible role in Canadian society?

Owens (1997) would argue that over the past forty years social studies has not lived up to its scholastic potential. Ultimately, within the field of social studies, the view is one of negativity (Kincheloe, 2001). A summary of Kincheloe's findings would reveal the following faults: students' limited exercise of democratic values; students' and teachers' over reliance on textbooks; conservative instruction practices that avoids genuine innovative practices; teacher alienation within the field of education; confusion around the subject's intended goals; stunted academic activities that do little to challenge students' intellects; behaviour and classroom management issues; fragmented time schedules; and a lack of public awareness around the importance of social studies as a credit course (p. 17). Kincheloe leaves the reader with a powerful impression that even the practitioners themselves are confused in terms of the purpose, direction, and conceptual potential of the course. As a result of this turmoil, social studies teachers resort to factual drill and conduct classes that lack or stymie real analytical questions. Consequently, they are forced to question how best to teach a course that is skill oriented, is linked to democratic premises, and is central to the notion in creating citizenship as an outcome.

Taking Kincheloe's (2001) advice, teachers must take social studies and "get beyond the nonconceptual approach" (p. 26). The concern is not the potential of the course-for who would deny democracy and citizenship as an important result? Rather, it is the struggle to implement instructional methods that accounts for the above constraints. The promise of social studies rests with the classroom practice and guidance from theorizing scholars that can disentangle themselves from the ongoing discussion that allows "the early 20th-century curriculum experiment called Social Studies to quietly die" (Egan, 1999, p. 132). It seems that social studies educators have buried themselves within a debate for far too long. Egan challenges them to reconsider the "expanding horizons" model in social studies curriculum due to the paradoxical result of children becoming alienated from the social experience. The further the model reaches "outward," the social studies curriculum ironically becomes more contained. The classroom experience has become sheltered and isolated - separate from the dynamic flow of everyday life. In many schools social studies education has become strictly a classroom experience divorced from the community. I argue that this disembodied experience has resulted in students experiencing the concept of citizenship and democracy only with the confines of the classroom. The question remains: how can social studies teachers realize the promise of social studies, beyond mere classroom socialization?

Counter to Egan's position, the solution does not lie solely in academics. The dilemma is how we really employ Dewey's understanding of what it means to educate for social life? The

common ground between Dewey's philosophy and classroom practice is a struggle to achieve praxis (Aoki, 1984; Eisner, 1985; Huebner, 1975). What is the common ground between experience-based learning and academic learning? Can both have a shared place in the educational setting? Dewey believed that people learn by putting thought into action: that is, primarily, by confronting problems that arise while engaging in activities that interest them (Dewey, 1938). He advocated that education should start with a child's interest in concrete, everyday experiences and build on that understanding to connect with more formal (abstract) subject matter (Dewey, 1902). To ensure that connections with the intended learning are made and that the curriculum has relevance, the student participates in experiences drawn from community life and occupations. The curriculum is constructed around exploratory themes, and the student progresses through exploration and discovery (Dewey, 1902). The experiences that the students have are supplemented with more specific work in the subject areas of language, science, history, geography, fine arts, math, music, and industrial arts (Dewey, 1900). Furthermore, Dewey considered schools to be central to democracy preservation. The role of schools is to allow students to learn *citizenship* through *practice* (Dewey, 1916). By having genuine experiences that are carefully tailored to instruct the curriculum and meet the needs of the student, connected learning (linking self to knowledge) is not left to chance (Dewey, 1916) and youth are enabled to take their rightful place within society.

As Dewey (1938) intuitively knew, "every experience lives on in further experiences. Hence, the central problem in education based upon experience is to select the kind of experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (p. 27). How do we actually and actively produce democratic citizens? Is social studies the best course to inculcate these concepts? Kaye (1995) provides a partial answer: "Through schooling and education a people expresses and cultivates its public values, identities and aspirations, and prepares its newest generations to engage them. Thus, *a democratic society requires a democratic education*" (emphasis in original, p. 123). The obstacle in the path of achieving this kind of education includes not only increasing inequality, but "political and cultural freedoms [that are] under attack and democratic activity becoming narrower and shallower, subordinated to the 'freedom of the market,' the imperatives of capitol and the manners of the media" (p. 125).

### **The Struggle of Democracy, Citizenship and Curriculum**

How then can the public exert its position against the corporate and political elite and the limited conception of democracy they promote in society? "Democracy, by definition, cannot mean merely that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every 'citizen' can 'govern' and that society places [them], even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 40). What this means, according to today's understanding, is a form of democracy that "combines the Aristotelian notion of virtue as individual excellence with the ethical concept of democracy as a way of life espoused by John Dewey" (Curtis, 1995, p. 133). For a democracy to become a way of life,

communities must be formed through effective communication, shared social ideals, and a commitment to solve common social problems...local communities must communicate with and share in the common social ideals of the larger society...the ultimate purpose must be to create the good life by conferring equal rights and providing for human excellence...the highest obligation of the citizen must be to engage in the practice of politics—that is, to participate in public life...all citizens must be

educated for participation in that way of living in order for the political conditions of democracy to be met. (Curtis, 1995, p. 133)

Is this particular "reality" a possible "condition" in the social studies curriculum? Can students realize this within the struggle of Canada's democratic nationalistic aim to include the possibility for a full engagement of civic involvement? What is an appropriate curriculum for a democracy? Carr (1998) argues, "any contemporary democratic society always reflects the definition of democracy which that society has accepted as legitimate and true...[and] the debates about the curriculum that occur in a democracy at any given time will reveal both how that democracy interprets itself, and how that interpretation is being challenged" (p. 324). My democratic examination aims to present a possible and potential means for curriculum to socially engender future citizens and to promote the vision of a "good society."

Curriculum has immense importance in determining the skills, knowledge and attitudes that stand to be fostered, particularly in light of the varied views of society that could contribute to an intellectual battleground, with each party struggling to promote its version of reality for society. Thus, drawing from the above discussion, we must first ask, "What is democracy?" Etymologically, one could present various historical uses of the term as it applies to curriculum theory. The realization at the end of the discussion is that democracy is still misunderstood in conceptual-meaning, and that there exists a "fundamental disagreement between rival and social groups" (Carr, 1998, p. 332) that necessarily contributes to open and democratic disputation. This is important to ponder because the "primary function of democracy [is] educative" (Pateman, 1970, p. 21). For modern society, this democratic understanding, or misunderstanding, is only possible because the existence of a liberal society allow these particular democratic principles to be practiced.

With the onset of industrialization, traditional community values founded in democratic liberalism changed radically, and they continued to do so as people aggressively adopted a neo-liberal mindset. Consequently, the cultural environment was degraded by a fragmented community, divided by labour practices, disparities in wealth, and political interests. In education, there continues to be a desperate need for Dewey's experiential approach to successfully educate the child for the "common good." However, the common mistake educators and curriculum theorists make is failing to view the student as a participating and active member of society; for the "primary role of the curriculum in a democracy is to be a curriculum *for* democracy, reproducing those forms of consciousness and social relationships that meaningful participation in democratic life requires" (emphasis in original, Carr, 1998, p. 336). Carr argues that Dewey's conception of democracy was bound to fail. Dewey's curricular democracy "lacks the necessary conditions for its practical application... [given] the inadequate and impoverished conception of democracy that such a society embodies and accepts" (Carr, 1998, 336). Teachers' instructional methods continue to educate for the "passive" student in the classroom. One is forced to accept that society defines separately what democracy is to be in philosophy and in practice. It is imperative then to rebuild instructional methods for social studies from two vantage points, the democratic and the curricular, if teachers are to be open to the possibility of education contributing to a communal society. What does this mean for Canadian social studies?

To state Dewey's concept of participatory democracy is to fail is unfounded. Dewey's educational philosophy is evolutionary, progressing forever forward in social practice. In this I see the "reciprocal relationship" that exists between curriculum and democracy. As educational practitioners and theorists we must not underestimate the power of educational

transformation. A democratic curriculum is not dependent on the societal role of democracy alone. Curriculum can and does influence society. I do agree with Carr's warning against allowing politics to "distort curriculum" and to avoid this by incorporating democratic discussion and thus shape the educational role of curriculum that in turn contributes to a future democratic society. Democratic education must do more than just serve economic and vocational ends. Curriculum is not a device to train members of a democracy; curriculum must give voice to those who challenge society to address injustice. In short, a democratic and active civic education is meant to improve the quality of life at the most immediate level—the community—but is inexorably connected to the democratic discourse we call Canada.

As social studies educators, we must work to ensure that democratic education is not merely a marginalized construct in curricular theory and practice. Democratic participation is not a popular enactment in modern liberal societies. However, civic participation is critical to democracy, encompassing all members of the said society (Phillips, 1999). Pedagogy must strive to do more than just produce passive, socialized students who accept the political status quo and are versed in "democratic idle talk" (Sears, 1997, p. 33). Social studies, in fact, should be the impetus in preparing pupils to participate actively in all facets of life in society. Therefore, we must promote a model of active democratic participation that would include a broader concept of community participation and foster democratic values through community Service-learning and curricular reform. Genuine reform starts with the responsibility of accepting that teaching "has not done more to realize fully the democratic promises that continue to underwrite public education" (Willinsky, 1998, p. 16). Is this the role of social studies? How can we possibly fulfill this role in light of the current demands and challenges in the classroom? Sears (1997) takes this even further by asking, "What is a Canadian?" (p. 19) and he challenges our meanings of what it means to be a Canadian and the purpose of citizenship education in the Canadian classroom.

## Civics

Richardson (2001) points out that public education was, in the early years of this century, merely the promise to honour Massey's conception of the "Good Canadian" (which was steeped in British traditionalism), in hopes of assimilating a broad diversity of cultures. This concept was espoused in 1925 but, ironically, curriculum designers did not give it real attention until the release of the "Western Protocol for Social Studies Education" in 1999 (Richardson, 2001, p. 2). Teaching efforts have sought to "create" an identity that is national and is built on a civic consciousness strongly bound to an emotional interpretation or reading of "nation" (Richardson, 2002, p. 56). However, Richardson (2002) reminds us that we continue to struggle with what we understand to be "Canadianization," which lacks "a clear and commonly understood definition" (p. 60). Today, we still flounder not only in our vague understanding of what it means to be Canadian in a nationalistic sense, but also what it means at the local level, in practice, and as common citizens.

Society enables students to fulfill talents and qualities by virtue of individual progress and to achieve harmony with other living beings. Civic consciousness helps to resolve social conflicts, strengthen national bonds, and instill a sense of belonging. Is this possible in a nation where this consciousness is so fragmented? The word civics is derived from the Latin word "civis," which means "a citizen." A similar Latin word, "*Civitas*" means "city state." Both concepts have given birth to the social science known as "civics." Civics is an old subject and was previously taught alongside history and political science. It was introduced as separate subject only in the nineteenth century. Thus, civics is that branch of human knowledge that deals with the rights and duties of humans that live as members of a

politically organized group (Alejandro, 1993). However, the current reality of Canada makes civic effort a daunting challenge. Sadly, curriculum designers consistently identify citizenship as paramount among requirements essential for graduation for Canadian students in social studies. They do so, however, without offering clear "methods" for teachers to employ for citizenship to be realized beyond the passive classroom experience.

Alberta Learning (2000) has signified citizenship as the "ultimate goal" for students in social studies. The intent is for students to become knowledgeable and purposeful "responsible citizens." To achieve responsible citizenry status, the following criteria becomes the benchmarks for students and teachers in this course:

- Understanding the role, rights and responsibilities of a citizen in a democratic society and a citizen in the global community
- Participating constructively in the democratic process by making rational decisions
- Respecting the dignity and worth of self and others. (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 3).

A complete understanding of being a Canadian citizen, according to this curriculum document, is made possible by drawing upon the content disciplines. In short, the student develops the skills of citizenship by applying rapidly changing knowledge standards to meet the needs of the "Canadian community and the world" (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 3). This is accomplished, however, primarily within the classroom. It should be noted that Alberta Learning views this form of citizen creation as a simultaneous process of addressing knowledge, skills, and attitude objectives. Hence, to become not only a local and national citizen, but also a global citizen in a changing world, "emphasis is placed on learning those Social Studies facts, concepts, generalizations and skills that are useful for lifelong learning and responsible citizenship" (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 3). What happened to "active" from the WCP Social studies K-12 Foundation Document?

Osborne (1997) concisely defines citizenship as a common understanding beyond legal status, as a member of the state (complete with the rights and benefits associated with membership), and the duties that are expected. Citizenship is situated as "intensely value laden, embodying a set of ideals that represent[s] what citizens ought to be and how they ought to live in order to enjoy the rights of citizenship" (Osborne, 1997, p. 39). Osborne is clear that to be a "good citizen" one must go beyond minimal requirements in the form of community involvement, personal efforts dedicated to the public's well-being and, simply, in helping others. As teachers, we must be able to educate our students to possess citizenship as "a matter of belief" (Osborne, 1997, p. 41). Furthermore, Osborne argues that if we are to teach citizenship, students and teachers must be cognizant of the debate that surrounds the concept, and this is significant to the Canadian challenge. I would like to extend this further by proposing that citizenship is not merely subject matter that must be taught, but rather a process of active involvement and discovery that is intimately linked to the curriculum of social studies and that intensifies the academic experience. Can education balance active involvement and student responsibility, with the demands of curriculum, evaluation, and student uniqueness? Democracy, for Osborne (1997), "depends on the qualities of its citizens. It also depends on the existence of a vital civil society - that network of non-political institutions (unions, associations, clubs, organizations of all kinds) in which people participate and practise such democratic skills" (p. 49). Thus, the road to a democratic society and civic understanding of self is a learned process. What better place than within schools and in the community to accomplish this understanding - with social studies as our common ground!

Service-learning as a possible educational landscape could allow for harmony in the creative blending of curriculum and community needs, by providing for actively engaged learning. As a social studies teacher, within traditional education, the hope for me rests within a concept of servant leadership (Dickson, 1976; Greenleaf, 1977). I share in Taubman's (2000) educational vision of hope that is "attune[d] to the thick meanings that we make with our students" (p. 26). Within those meanings evolves a learning community, a place to belong. The best hope for establishing such a learning community lies in Service-learning-a combination of the experiential-the active aspect of citizenship-with the academics of the social studies curriculum.

Service-learning has been identified as the modern vehicle for reform that is appropriate for achieving the current goals of education and youth development (Bhaerman, Cordell & Gomez, 1998). Bhaerman, Cordell & Gomez state that Service-learning is consistent with the goals of systemic educational reform attempting to change the very nature of how students learn in school, making it attractive to policymakers, administrators, teachers, students, and community members at all levels. The optimism for this reform is reflected in Waterman's (1997) findings in curricular outcomes: improved academics and positive social involvement for learners. The promise for educational change fostering this instructional reform has potential positive effects on the school environment and curriculum as elements of instruction founded in sound experiential and curricular practice.

Service-learning is an instructional strategy, a philosophy, and a process (Kinsley & McPherson, 1995). The numerous perspectives engaged with the development of service-learning methodology present mixed philosophies: volunteerism, community service, and Service-learning (Morton, 1995). The National and Community Service Trust Act of the United States of America argues that "[s]ervice-learning combines service to the community with the student learning in a way that improves both the student and the community" (The National Youth Leadership Council & The University of Minnesota, 1993, p. 1). The Act provides a further framework as implementation guidelines with the following criteria. Service-learning, the Act proclaims,

- Is a method whereby students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets actual needs of communities;
- Is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of high education, or community service program and the community;
- Helps foster civic responsibility and caring;
- Is integrated into and enhances the student's academic curriculum, or the education components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled;
- Provides structured time for the students and the participants to reflect on the service experience;
- Provides young people with the opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities-experiential education;
- Enhances what is taught in the school by extending student learning beyond the classroom. (The National Youth Leadership Council & The University of Minnesota, 1993, p. 1)

The Act seeks to enable authentic learning through the exercise of student roles that contribute to a democracy (Foran, 2001). Stanton (1990) views service-learning as "an approach to experiential learning, an expression of values-service to others, which determines the purpose, nature and process of educational exchange between learners and the people they

serve, and between experiential education programs and the community organizations with which they work" (p. 1). The practices of service-learning lead students to contexts they may not have had the opportunity to experience otherwise, extending students' experiences well beyond the conceptual. One could argue that service-learning is the curricular practice that can engender hooks' (1994) and Warren's (1998) "engaged pedagogy."

Cairn & Cairn (1999) reported that service-learning is a pedagogical movement that cuts across the curriculum and is not strictly an academic discipline. Service-learning is a tie that strengthens the method and discipline for social studies. This tie brings the agent of education and the benefactor of education together through a process of genuine learning. Therefore, it is critical to embrace the view that the most important outcome in education is what our students do with the knowledge and skills they have learned. Service-learning is the key to reforming a traditional social studies approach by making the pedagogy richer and fully experiential. This is accomplished by service-learning centering on the deliberate connection of curricular outcomes with acts of service. The result of this educational practice will be outcomes of improved academic standing and raised levels of community involvement that improves the quality of life.

In presenting a possible academic practice for social studies that engages in service-learning, I anticipate scholarly discussion will lead educators and students back into the community. This method of instruction seems to provide reconciliation for the challenges that face social studies education. Can service-learning allow for citizenship, in light of the pluralistic realities confronting our curricular delivery? Can service-learning link Dewey's philosophy in educational theory and classroom practice, the fulfilment of praxis? What is the ground of truce between experience-based learning and academic learning? Can both have a place in the social studies setting? Can one approach be effective without the other? How much of modern education is experiential? The reality in the senior high school classroom, in my experience, is simple to articulate: very little of the education/learning process is gained through experience. Lindsay & Ewert (1999) argue:

teaching in...schools [has] focused on the facts as found in the textbooks and not on more critical or creative skills such as drawing conclusions, applying knowledge, or creative writing... textbooks are regarded as an efficient means of communicating information to students but, in reality, [they] deny or restrict responsibility for learning as well as opportunities for active involvement in the learning process...it is usually the experiences and thoughts of others that form the curricular content of a public school education. (p. 16)

This is reflective of Kincheloe's (2001) findings. Therefore, at this juncture the consideration of service-learning, as an instructional strategy for social studies teachers, takes on paramount status when we contemplate the possibilities of reform.

I believe, as does Lambert (1999), that education, at its best, represents human engagement, and it is this shared process between students, teachers and the communities that I feel will promote and reconstruct a more positive civilization. The curricular experience must do more than further textual-knowledge advancement. It must empower students to reach their full potential. If the purpose of curriculum is to enrich the school experiences of both youth and adults in the educational system, perhaps this can best occur when teachers and students are encouraged to lead, and are challenged to be more fully engaged with the world- participatory

democracy. Would this not contribute to the vision of social studies: active, responsible citizens contributing to a democratic society? I believe we must

transform the inevitably limited and schematic conceptions of school programs into the kinds of activities that genuinely engage students, ...create the environments that open up new vistas and provide for deep satisfactions, [and] make a difference in the lives that children lead. No curriculum teaches itself, it must always be mediated, and teaching is the fundamental mediator. (Eisner, 1991, p. 11)

One way to transform curriculum requires that teachers move away from a traditional mode of teaching and toward a partnership with their students in which they converse with each other as they create knowledge together (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). I believe that the best way to meet the needs of learners is to involve them in the co-creation of important questions, knowledge, and shared pedagogical stories as democratic citizens. I am placing my faith in the promise of service-learning. This experiential approach will be the teaching modality that will bring face-to-face the encounter of students immersed in the subject matter of social studies, the other, the community. This is potentially the moment of realization for the student as a citizen, acknowledging **their** cultural sense of "Canadianism" in a democratic society, but from their perspectives of plurality.

### **The Aleph vs. the Curriculum of Sameness**

Diem (2000) notes "that traditional teacher centered education paradigms have not appreciably changed in the last twenty years," (p. 493) and this observation would reflect the practices of most educators and social studies instructors. Diem further indicates that despite this lack of change there exists a "pedagogical possibility" in "discussion [that] can encompass...collaborative work among students and active construction of knowledge based upon problem solving, writing reflectively on what they have learned, relating to past knowledge and applying it to others; all important Social Studies skills" (2000, p. 496). In light of our standard assessment tools and accepted practices outlined by current curriculum documents, it is evident that we are still teaching from a "curriculum of sameness" (Carson & Johnston, 2001). Can service-learning provide the aleph, "the point in which the past, the present and the future are condensed to form a picture where all time and space are embraced" (Alejandro, 1993, p. 1)? For social studies, this matrix would be the temporal moment of civic consciousness as it connects with the student's unique perspective of national identity at the local-school level. Service-learning allows for plural realities to become intertwined in the curriculum of the present day, and involves the student in an active, responsible role as a participant in a democracy created for the future. As contributing citizens, respective of the plurality, students will discover their contribution to the rich foundations that continually redefine a democratic Canada. Within the aleph, the student lives the curriculum, in academic authenticity, as a contributor to society and not just a passive benefactor of democracy.

Citizenship, through the guidance of social studies, is more than a possibility despite the pluralism within Canadian schools. Service-learning can very well create a "place" for student diversity in a democracy. Needed for this to become practice is for social studies to authentically embrace "active" and "responsible" elements of the curriculum document, and create an open forum for reflective-student dialogue in their roles as citizens. I cannot deny, nor stress enough, the importance of language in shaping our collective consciousness of our

roles and societal responsibilities. This very thinking is rooted in our ethical actions and our moral obligations as we deal with issues of cultural assimilation, the oppression of women and marginalized populations, the poor, and our greed in resource exploitation. Houser & Kuzmic (2001) present challenges of independence, isolation, and domination that face us as educators. Regardless, they encourage us to "begin to recognize and embrace the interdependence, reciprocity, and contingency of our postmodern world. Nor must we lose sight [sic] of the mutual relationships that exist between self and community" (Houser & Kuzmic, 2001, p. 453). With this in mind Diem's point becomes obvious when we are asked to consider the pedagogical advances in our educational practices: lecturing, note-taking, round-robin reading, reliance on textbooks, use of information disconnected from the everyday life of the student, and a lack of adequate, critical reflection.

How do teachers and schools link society with self, citizenship, democracy, and life-long learning despite the diverse populations that exist in the Canadian classroom? How might education generate an accepting dialogue that is open to community-civic involvement without sacrificing academic primacy? The postmodern framework includes the possibility of the ethical promise that is inherent in all citizens by considering the "important implications for a more connected approach to citizenship education in general" (Houser & Kuzmic, 2001, p. 455). Community strength, along with a Canadian vision of democracy, is the virtue of social studies education. But is it strong enough to face significant social changes, i.e., an increasingly plural Canadian culture and polarization of individualism? The specific argument interprets the interconnectedness of social studies education as embodying the following: self/society, subject/object, mind/body, humans/environment, community/citizens, and the continued building on of national traditions — a democratic Canada. The primacy of social studies is a curricular innovation for the common good — the development of citizens so they can deal with contemporary challenges, in a way that results in a just society based on caring. I refer once again to Smith's (2000) cautions and social concerns. Houser & Kuzmic (2001) claim this intention has become a lost attempt to produce citizens by oversimplified formulas in the curriculum. What is needed is "real action," on that part of student citizens, using social studies as the means to improve democratic life at the community and national level.

As social studies evolved, that of the "responsible citizen" gradually replaced the notion of the "good citizen," and somehow "active" was left out of the curricular language. The intent in social studies education was not to replicate an uncritical, obedient societal member, but rather a reflective decision maker focused on the needs of the community. This citizen was to be beyond the "me" mentality, by solving issue-laden events that are current and relevant to the community and the student. Since the 1970s, challenges to and refinement in social studies education explored assumptions around decision making in the development of citizenship, facts and values, knowledge, and the familiar knowledge-skills-attitudes that structure many curricular documents today. Social studies educators continue to struggle - philosophically, theoretically, and practically - with the classroom and the social meaning of citizenship. This alone is explanation enough in understanding the criticism launched against social studies. The struggle has resulted in confusion in methodological implementation within the classroom and stunted possibilities for students to benefit from a challenging and needed curriculum. Egan (1999) may very well be right: we are slowly dying, and the cause is our own rhetoric.

Is the resistance in social studies due to our limiting approaches stemming from our dualistic-Cartesian split, the dominating Western mechanistic paradigm of mind/body? Social studies is a victim of subject separation, of discipline isolation, and of the community-individual

suffering a disconnection and fragmentation. Social studies may very well have to present an alternate understanding along Capra's (1996) concept of life and society-understood as a vast web of interconnected and interdependent relationships, systems, and systems of systems-if it is to remain a viable classroom learning experience. Service-learning provides a possible curricular connection between the multicultural stance of students, their unique learning needs, the community, and the infinite issues that an active, concerned, informed citizen could involve themselves in as he or she approaches social studies education. Potentially, this creates a program of studies that facilitates an ethic of caring for others, the community, the environment, global issues, and a sense of what it means to be Canadian. This, when further developed through experiential social interaction, may continue to broaden our classroom perspectives of multicultural, pluralistic certainty in Canada, but with more self-conscious social studies students.

The need for social studies is apparent given the knowledge that students will eventually confront social injustice, inequality, racism, cultural stances, social structures, power, interest groups, organizations, and environmental concerns that will challenge all "good citizens." What does it mean to be responsible or active? Why does social studies remain cognitively-laden rather than experiential? An established premise of service-learning is that it promotes social efficacy, interest in politics, and community involvement. However, is a student engaged in service-learning a "democratic" member of society? Is a service-learning curriculum directly or indirectly linked to a "democratic curriculum?" Dewey (1916; 1938) felt that an involved student who participates in the affairs of their community would, by default, become democratized within the experiential process of serving and learning. A consideration for further research is to explore the potential impact of a "democratic attitude" resulting from serving in the community. If a democratic curriculum has to emerge from a democratic society, the question that challenges research in social studies education is whether Service-learning contributes to a curriculum for democracy. Service-learning may very well be coming into educational practice in response to the lack of democratic practices that seem to be evident in modern communities. If Service-learning continues, it may very well become the kind of reform that is needed in social studies education to achieve a true democratic curriculum, and a civic consciousness, that is uniquely Canadian. Serving-learning is an expression of individual civic "Canadianization" facilitated by the guidance of social studies teachers: "Each citizen brings a unique perspective to discussions of issues and should be able to participate directly at all levels in the political life of the nation" (Sears, 1997, p. 21). Social studies must allow for a pluralistic aleph. Students need community engagement that is more than a symbolic understanding of citizenship, if the curricular practices of activity are to be authentic educational experiences for students as participating democratic citizens.

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